

'Tis the season: Tips for keeping your home safe during the holiday season

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Home fires are most common in the winter months, peaking in December and January, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

As the holiday season approaches — and with it colder weather, extravagantly decorated houses, and packed kitchens — Oklahoma State University Extension offers up tips to keep your house standing over the winter months.

It all starts with electricity

Overloaded outlets and loose cords are among the primary causes of this surge in home fires.

To avoid any issues, Scott Frazier, an associate professor of biosystems and agricultural engineering, and OSU Extension specialist for energy management, provides the following advice.

For holiday lights, single extension cords should not exceed 50 feet in length. Also, anything that exceeds the listed amperage could result in the cord becoming hot. Avoid overloading outlets; outlets call for standard, two-receptacle outlets not to exceed 1,500 watts total.

"Something like a small bedroom heater, that would typically be 1,100 watts," Frazier said. "If you're plugging more into that outlet with two receptacles on it, it better be small."

Frazier also said not to tuck extension cords under carpets and rugs, despite the eyesore they can be. It not only creates a tripping hazard in the house, but if the cord is frayed, it can result in a rug catching on fire.

Be cautious about linking three or more strands of lights together. The more lines linked together, the higher the resistance becomes, which can lead to the cords heating up. If wrapped around a real tree, which dries out over time, there is a risk of fire.

Outdoor lights and extension cords are specifically designed to withstand the weather and winter elements, so be aware of the difference between indoor and outdoor options, Frazier said. Also, pay attention to ensure wiring is not running through puddles of water on the ground.

Fire comes next

As temperatures drop, people will start using heaters and fireplaces for the first time in months. Before doing so, always check smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors.

"It's an easy thing to do," Frazier said. "There's really no excuse not to do it."

At a minimum, detectors and fire extinguishers should be placed on every floor in a house, including basements. Frazier recommends that chimneys and fireplaces be inspected annually due to the potential creosote buildup that can occur.

Examine the pressure gauge and dates on the exterior of fire extinguishers to ensure they are properly functioning.

"It's 20 years old, even if the gauge shows it is OK, go get a new one," Frazier said.

Keep extinguishers in easily accessible areas, where a fire is unlikely to occur. Spots like a garage, coat closet, or at the top of stairs are good. Frazier also recommends stashing one in your car. It may save you or someone else from a fire you come upon.

Holidays lend themselves to cooking larger meals than most are accustomed to. To avoid any fire hazards, Frazier advised preparing as much as possible beforehand and keeping the kitchen organized.

Avoid letting unnecessary occupants into the kitchen, like pets and children, unless they have a specific role.

Hold off on consuming any alcoholic beverages until after the cooking is completed.

"It's mostly scalding and

fire hazards," Frazier said. "Watch out for pan handles hanging over the edges of stoves and counters."

Every Thanksgiving, videos of people frying turkeys on social media go viral.

"I've seen someone put a frozen turkey in the turkey fryer, and I don't know what the equivalent explosive power would be, but it was spectacular," Frazier said.

When frying a turkey, always do it outside and have a fire extinguisher nearby in case anything goes wrong. A common mistake is overfilling the vat with peanut oil, which will bubble over onto open flames when a turkey is placed in it.

Fire safety blankets are a good option to have around in kitchens and can be thrown onto grease fires to help contain them as a secondary option. They cannot replace a fire extinguisher, though, and you'd need an extinguisher in the event of a grease fire.

Other guidelines to follow for safety

Older decorations use incandescent lights that may have cracked or dry insulation. Pull out the wiring and inspect it, inch by inch. "If it looks suspicious, throw it away," Frazier said.

Holiday candles should be placed on stable, heat-resistant surfaces, away from pets and children. Never leave it unattended and keep away from decorations that could easily catch on fire. Flameless candles are a great alternative.

Be aware of what table scraps are poisonous to pets. Mistletoe, holly berries, and Jerusalem cherries can be poisonous to children and pets. Even grapes can be a problem for dogs.

Avoid using furniture as a ladder. Make sure anything you stand on has at least three points of contact with the ground.



Photo by Mitchell Alcalde, OSU Agriculture

Home fires are most common in the winter months, peaking in December and January.

Legals

(Continued from page 7)

affidavits for longevity pay. Roll call: Commissioner Poindexter-yes; Commissioner Callahan-yes, and Commissioner Beck-yes. Motion carried.

AGENDA #10-A motion was made by Commissioner Callahan and seconded by Commissioner Beck to sign blanket purchase orders for December. Roll call: Commissioner Poindexter-yes; Commissioner Callahan-yes, and Commissioner Beck-yes. Motion carried.

AGENDA #11-A motion was made by Commissioner Callahan and seconded by Commissioner Beck to sign Highway Cash for December. Roll call: Commissioner Poindexter-yes; Commissioner Callahan-yes, and Commissioner Beck-yes. Motion carried.

AGENDA #12-A motion was made by Commissioner Callahan and seconded by Commissioner Beck to sign the State P-Card program. Roll call: Commissioner Poindexter-yes; Commissioner Callahan-yes, and Commissioner Beck-yes. Motion carried. Poindexter said this is a necessary step to prevent purchase orders.

AGENDA #13-A motion was made by Commissioner Callahan and seconded by Commissioner Beck to get a Purchase Order for the county. Barnes said once Bank of America gets the request, it will take about a week for the card to arrive before anything happens. Poindexter said anyone using the P-Card must take the training administered by the State Auditor. Motion carried.

AGENDA #14-A motion was made by Commissioner Callahan and seconded by Commissioner Beck to file for Emergency Management Act follow. Roll call: Commissioner Poindexter-yes; Commissioner Callahan-yes, and Commissioner Beck-yes. Motion carried.

AGENDA #15-A motion was made by Commissioner Callahan and seconded by Commissioner Beck to receive and file Copy of Certificate of Liability Insurance and current list of insurance companies for the Leach Fire Department. Roll call: Commissioner Poindexter-yes; Commissioner Callahan-yes, and Commissioner Beck-yes. Motion carried.

AGENDA #16-A motion was made by Commissioner Callahan and seconded by Commissioner Beck to receive and file from Brightside by draft resolution concerning the lease of the fairgrounds at \$600 per year fee from Techsico. Roll call: Commissioner Poindexter-yes; Commissioner Callahan-yes, and Commissioner Beck-yes. Motion carried.

AGENDA #17-A motion was made by Commissioner Callahan and seconded by Commissioner Beck to file and move forward with condemnation proceedings on Kansas Dry Kool of Kansas City, Mo., in the amount of \$682,17 per month. Roll call: Commissioner Poindexter-yes; Commissioner Callahan-yes, and Commissioner Beck-yes. Motion carried.

AGENDA #18-A motion was made by Commissioner Callahan and seconded by Commissioner Beck to file for sealed bids on road materials for the County Highway Department for six months. Persons interested in bidding should contact Michael Baker, P.A., located in the Delaware County Clerk's Office in Jay, Okla. Bids will be received at the Delaware County Clerk's Office on December 16, 2025, at 9 a.m. Bids will be received no later than 3 p.m. in the County Clerk's Office, Jay, Oklahoma 74339. The board reserves the right to accept/reject any and all bids and the right to re-advertise. County Bid #0008. Roll call: Commissioner Poindexter-yes; Commissioner Callahan-yes, and Commissioner Beck-yes. Motion carried.

AGENDA #19-A motion was made by Commissioner Callahan and seconded by Commissioner Beck to approve Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Officers for Emergency Management. Roll call: Commissioner Poindexter-yes; Jeff Reeves, Requisitioning Officers - David Poindexter, Rhonda Gower, Karen Parker, and Barbara Barnes; Commissioner Callahan-yes, and Commissioner Beck-yes. Motion carried.

AGENDA #20-A motion was made by Commissioner Callahan and seconded by Commissioner Beck to file for a Purchase Order for sealed bids on road materials for the County Highway Department for six months. Persons interested in bidding should contact Michael Baker, P.A., located in the Delaware County Clerk's Office in Jay, Okla. Bids will be received at the Delaware County Clerk's Office on December 16, 2025, at 9 a.m. Bids will be received no later than 3 p.m. in the County Clerk's Office, Jay, Oklahoma 74339. The board reserves the right to accept/reject any and all bids and the right to re-advertise. County Bid #0008. Roll call: Commissioner Poindexter-yes; Commissioner Callahan-yes, and Commissioner Beck-yes. Motion carried.

AGENDA #21-A motion was made by Commissioner Callahan and seconded by Commissioner Beck to file and move forward with condemnation proceedings on Kansas Dry Kool of Kansas City, Mo., in the amount of \$682,17 per month. Roll call: Commissioner Poindexter-yes; Commissioner Callahan-yes, and Commissioner Beck-yes. Motion carried.

AGENDA #22-A motion was made by Commissioner Callahan and seconded by Commissioner Beck to sign resolution renewing participation in Circuit Engineering District #1. Roll call: Commissioner Poindexter-yes; Commissioner Callahan-yes, and Commissioner Beck-yes. Motion carried.

AGENDA #23-A motion was made by Commissioner Callahan and seconded by Commissioner Beck to sign resolution renewing participation in Circuit Engineering District #1. Roll call: Commissioner Poindexter-yes; Commissioner Callahan-yes, and Commissioner Beck-yes. Motion carried.

AGENDA #24-A motion was made by Commissioner Callahan and seconded by Commissioner Beck to adjourn the meeting at 10:12 a.m. Roll call: Commissioner Poindexter-yes; Commissioner Callahan-yes, and Commissioner Beck-yes. Motion carried.

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